

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of generating an image for use in monitoring interaction between a user and a computer, the method including:
 - generating random reference data wherein the reference data comprises a plurality of characters;
 - randomly selecting a font set from one of a plurality of font sets, each font set comprising a plurality of font images;
 - retrieving for each character of the reference data a corresponding font image; and
 - combining the retrieved font images.
2. The method of claim 1, in which the reference data is a random reference number and the characters are in the form of numerical digits.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein each font image includes a font background and a user identifiable character defined by removal of the font background so as to define the user identifiable character.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the font background includes at least one line defined by removal of the font background so as to define the line and wherein the line has angular protrusions extending along its length.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein each font image includes a font background including a plurality of font patterns, and a user identifiable

character defined by a concentration of the font patterns so as to define the user identifiable character.

6. The method of claim 5, in which the font patterns are provided in the font background in a random fashion.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the font image includes at least one line defined by removal of the font patterns so as to define the line and where and wherein the line has angular protrusions extending along its length.

8. The method of claim 1, which includes generating a sine wave with a random period and combining the retrieved font images so that upper borders of the font images are shaped in the form of the sine wave.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein each font image includes a user identifiable character with a border that has angular protrusions.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein each font image includes a font background and a user identifiable character and wherein a transition between the user identifiable character and the font background is blurred.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein each font image includes a font background including a plurality of font patterns, and a user identifiable character defined by removal of the font background so as to define the user identifiable character.

12. The method of claim 1, which is performed at an image server for serving HTML pages of a web based commerce facility.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein each font set includes a plurality of predefined fonts that are created with human intervention and subsequently stored in a font library.

14. A machine-readable medium embodying a sequence of instructions that, when executed by a machine, cause the machine to:

generate random reference data wherein the reference data comprises a plurality of characters;

randomly select a font set from one of a plurality of font sets, each font set comprising a plurality of font images;

retrieve for each character of the reference data a corresponding font image; and

combine the retrieved font images thereby to generate an image for use in monitoring interaction between a user and a computer.

15. The machine-readable medium of claim 14, in which the reference data is a random reference number and the characters are in the form of numerical digits.

16. The machine-readable medium of claim 14, wherein each font image includes a font background and a user identifiable character defined by removal of the font background so as to define the user identifiable character.

17. The machine-readable medium of claim 14, wherein each font image includes a font background including a plurality of font patterns, and a user identifiable character defined by a concentration of the font patterns so as to define the user identifiable character.

18. The machine-readable medium of claim 16, in which the font patterns are provided in the font background in a random fashion.

19. The machine-readable medium of claim 14, wherein each font image includes a font background including a plurality of font patterns, and a user identifiable character defined by removal of the font background so as to define the user identifiable character.

20. A computer system to generate an image for use in monitoring user interaction with a computer, the system including at least one server to:

generate random reference data wherein the reference data comprises a plurality of characters;

randomly select a font from one of a plurality of fonts, each font comprising a plurality of font images;

retrieve for each character of the reference data a corresponding font image; and

combine the retrieved font images.

21. The system of claim 20, in which the reference data is a random reference number and the characters are in the form of numerical digits.

22. The system of claim 20, wherein the at least one server is an image server for serving HTML pages of a web based commerce facility.

23. A computer system to generate an image for use in monitoring user interaction with a computer, the system including:

means to generate random reference data wherein the reference data comprises a plurality of characters;

means to randomly select a font from one of a plurality of fonts, each font comprising a plurality of font images;

means to retrieve for each character of the reference data a corresponding font image; and

means to combine the retrieved font images.